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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews basic information needed by college students to write a term paper. Sources of information are discussed (i.e. books and journal articles), as are the "nuts and bolts" of procuring the needed information to write a quality term paper. The ERIC system and the Internet are discussed; particular attention is paid to the various university writing labs that are available on the Internet. (Author/NKA)

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Using the College/University Library for a Term Paper

ED 415 508

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Abstract

This paper reviews basic information needed by college students to write a term paper. Sources of information are discussed as are the "nuts and bolts" of procuring the needed information to write a quality term paper. The ERIC system as well as the INTERNET are discussed.

For most college students, writing a term paper is often a major part of their grade, and consumes a large amount of college time. Some students have already been well prepared in high school to write a term paper. For others, their preparation has been less extensive, and their skills weak. For still others who have been away from school for several years, their writing and research skills have become rusty and remedial work is necessary in terms of writing. This paper will attempt to discuss the main issues in terms of procuring the necessary information to write a quality term paper utilizing the resources of a college or university library.

Books as Sources of Information

As is probably well known, books are good sources of information. However, students must be aware that there are different types of books. There are textbooks, reference books, and source books. It may be important to differentiate between primary and secondary sources at this point.

A primary source is a book that was written by one author and which includes his or her ideas. A primary source is important as the information is usually from that single author. For example, for psychology students doing a term paper on Freud, a book that Freud himself wrote would be a good primary source.

A secondary source is a book that describes what Freud

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Students can enter a person's name, the title of a book or even the title of a subject and procure a number of sources regarding a topic.

Journals

Journals are another source of information for term papers. However, students must be judicious as to their appropriateness. Some journals may be quite relevant for a senior doing a term paper in their major. In other instances, a journal is simply inappropriate for a freshman level English 101 course.

Nowadays, many journals are available only on microfilm and microfiche. This is due to the gargantuan cost of paper and also due to storage factors. However, every student in every major should be exposed to the key journals in their field of endeavor. Most instructors will ask you to read at least one article from a journal in your area of study. A journal typically includes the latest information in terms of research and theory in certain fields.

One good thing about journals is that they usually cite or reference the main work that has been done in the field. So, if you find one good journal article, you should be able to locate other similar articles on the same topic in this field.

Students begin to find that the same author is conducting research or writing on similar topics in the field. Once an author is located, students can begin to

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procure his or her books either in the college library or from inter-library loan.

Inter-library loan is a good way for students to procure either chapters from books or entire books for reference purposes. Librarians attempt to help each other and students by faxing several pages to a student or to another library. Libraries will also mail entire books to students in some instances.

The ERIC System

The ERIC (Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse) system is another way to access information regarding papers that have been published and that have been presented at conferences. Some periodicals include papers published in the ERIC system automatically. The ERIC system deals principally with educational papers but there are parts of the ERIC system (termed clearinghouses) that deal with other related issues- such as assessment, measurement and the like.

The ERIC system relies heavily on " descriptors"- words that can be used to search the system for specific terms, words or keywords or topics. The ERIC system will provide abstracts of various papers and can also provide either in microfiche form or in paper form, the entire paper.

The INTERNET

The INTERNET is available now to most university libraries and can be used to search for information worldwide. The technology of the INTERNET is growing

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rapidly and it is near impossible to predict when it's growth will end. Thus, one is left to their own devices to search the INTERNET using various "engines" which help to procure information.

Most " engines " ask that the user type in a word or words or phrase to assist in the search process. After a few seconds, several "hits" are indicated (usually listed in a one to ten fashion). If there are additional "hits", then a second list of ten is available. Depending upon how esoteric the topic is, there may be only a few "hits" or there may be several thousand. In perusing the initial hits, the reader may ascertain certain select authors or journals or books or magazines which may be directly relevant to the topic at hand.

If nothing is initially found, there are several other search " engines " that may prove useful. Often procuring sources from other libraries may take several days. However, there is now the availability of faxing information from one part of the United States to another. Thus information , or an article may be available in a day or two. Some large organizations have "web pages " where one can search for specific information relevant to a certain specific topic.

On the Internet however, one must be cautious as to the quality of the information procured. One has no way of knowing whether the information gleaned is from a reputable source or from some other less knowledgeable source.

Using the World Wide Web to Help With Writing

There are several writing labs that are available on the Internet to help with writing. For example, George Mason University Writing Center offers the following assistance :

How to Write an Abstract
Questions to Ask of Any Poem
Introductions and Conclusions
Painting with Punctuation
Writing About Film
How to Take an Essay Test
Revision Checklist and Editing Guidelines
A Guide to Gracious Criticism
A Sample MLA Bibliography
Keeping a Reading Journal
For those about to write...
Structuring AN Argument
Questions for Revision
Writing About Literature
A Helpful Online for Writing About Literature or Film

Bowling Green State University OWL (Online Writing Lab) offers online tutoring using e-mail.

Colgate University Writing Center offers assistance with the following : notetaking, Writing Essay Exams, Assertion, Illustration, Analysis, Clauses, Conjunctions and Punctuation.

Dakota State University OWL offers assistance utilizing the e-mail.

The Devry Institute of Technology has an online writing support center for assistance.

Rensselaer Writing Center can provide help with abstracts, basic prose style and mechanics, cover letters, critiques, writing with gender-fair language while St. Cloud's University LEO (Literacy Education Online) can aid with transitions and provide a guide to comparison/contrast types of essays.

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Taft Community College offers " punctuation made simple " and transitional elements. Texas Tech University writing center is also on line and can offer assistance in various aspects of writing.

The University of Richmond Writing Center and WAC program offers the following :

1) Where to Start a Paper
2) Brainstorming for Ideas
3) Clustering Ideas
4) Thesis Statements
5) Writing Effective Conclusions
6) Writing Effective Paragraphs
7) Adding Action and clarity to writing concise writing : Using Lanham's Paramedic Model
8) Glossing-- A way to check the focus of paragraphs
9) Transitional Phrases
10) Using Transitions
11) Making Effective Arguments
12) Introduction to Using Source Materials
13) Creative Use of Sources
14) Effective Direct Quotes
15) Incorporating Quota
16) Using Paraphrases
17) APA Documentation
18) Guide to Turabian's Manual for Writers
19) Examples of each model of documentation
20) Commonly Confused Words
21) Avoiding Clichés and Tired Phrases
22) Commas
23) Semicolons
24) Abbreviations
25) Capitalization

There are also handbooks and handouts available. The Writer's Workshop On-Line Handbook is available from the University of Illinois. The Rensselaer Writing Center Online Handouts are very readily accessed and the University of Texas- Austin has handouts available from the Undergraduate Writing Center .

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Students can learn to use the library as a resource in their learning and must learn to use the library as a tool to better learn about the world around them. It is incumbent upon universities to provide orientation and training in the use of the library and assist their students in it's use.